prevention of the misuse of such techniques for the purpose of pre-natal sex determination leading to female foeticide.

[English]

SAARC Meeting

2403. SHRI HARIN PATHAK :
SHRI SULTAN SALAHUDDIN OWAISI :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the subjects discussed at South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) meetings held in New Delhi recently;

(b) the details of the resolutions passed or declarations adopted at the end of the summit meeting;

(c) whether SAARC countries have discussed steps to ease visa restrictions and motivate tourism amongst themselves;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the future role envisaged for Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in international relations?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) Subjects discussed at the meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers in December, 1996 included, inter alia, the Integrated Programme of Action, Regional Economic Cooperation, cooperation in social issues such as poverty eradication, women and children, implementation of SAARC Conventions on Suppression of Terrorism and on Drug Trafficking, and the promotion of people-to-people contacts.

(b) The report adopted at the conclusion of the SAARC Council of Ministers' Meeting includes important decisions aimed at promotion of Regional Economic Cooperation, inter alia, in the fields of intra-SAARC investments, avoidance of double taxation, customs cooperation and for advancing the SAPTA process; on various social issues relevant to the region; a decision to hold meetings of SAARC Information Ministsers and Environment Ministers for furthering cooperation in their respective areas; and in a variety of fields for promotion of people-to-people contacts.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The Council discussed several steps aimed at the promotion of intra-SAARC tourism. It agreed to examine possibilities of expanding airlinks, of the introduction of currency conversion arrangements for tourists in the region; and has recommended the expansion of the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme.

(e) The Non-aligned Movement would continue to be relevant and play a useful role in evolving coordinated collective decisions amongst its member states on issues of importance/concerns to them.

[Translation]

Irrigation Project in Bihar

2404. SHRI RAJESH RANJAN ALIAS PAPPU YADAV : Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state :

(a) whether water resources are being utilised fully in the country, particularly in Bihar;

(b) if not, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Government propose to commission several irrigation projects of Bihar including swaran Rekha Project; and

(d) if so, the steps being taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA) (a) No, Sir.

(b) India receives annual precipitation of 4000 billion cubic metres including snowfall, however, the total utilisable water resources in the country is assessed as only 1142 billion cubic metres. Out of this, the present utilisation is about 606 billion cubic metres. Full utilisation of water resources is not possible due to various constraints such as limitations of storage sites, evaporation and vegetative transpiration losses and necessity to maintain river regimes by allowing certain minimum flows in the rivers.

(c) and (d) 17 Major (including Swaran Rekha Project), 24 Medium and 5 Extension, Renovation and Modernisation (ERM) projects are ongoing during Eight Five Year Plan in Bihar. With a view to expedite the completion of selected ongoing major and medium projects, Central Loan Assistance of Rs. 27.00 crores have been sanctioned during 1996-97 under Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP) for three major projects of Bihar namely, Upper Kiul, Durgawati and Kosi projects.

Canals in Maharashtra

2405. SHRI KACHARU BHAU RAUT : Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased state :

(a) whether the work relating to digging and cleaning of canals is undertaken every year in Maharashtra;

(b) if so, the details thereof; location-wise;

(c) whether the Government are aware that some small saplings have grown up in the canals of Maharashtra;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(e) the preventive measures taken being taken by the Government in this regard?